

Testimony in Support of House Bill 7285

Senator Doyle, Senator Kissel, Representative Tong, and distinguished members of the Joint Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Valerie J. Bryan and I am a long term resident of Hartford, CT. I am providing you with testimony in support of Proposed House Bill 7285, and amendments to make this Bill truly effective. Although Proposed House Bill 7285 intends to ensure compliance with the provisions of Section 7-294bb of the Connecticut General Statutes concerning the acceptance, processing, and investigation of complaints from members of the public relating that allege misconduct committed by law enforcement agency personnel, this Bill falls short of what is needed to accomplish its stated purpose.

Proposed House Bill 7285 recognizes that our police complaint process is not functioning the way it should; this is a laudable first step. Too often, citizens do not file complaints with police because they do not know how to do this, or do not have faith that their concerns will be addressed. A recent survey by the ACLU of Connecticut clearly shows that many Connecticut police agencies still make it difficult for members of the public to easily obtain information regarding complaint forms and processes easily. In some cases, this lack of transparency violates state law. Although Hartford was in compliance with the statute, the police department did not respond in a timely manner to questions about the complaint process. In fact based on the ACLU study, Hartford residents experienced a longer time compared to any other Connecticut city or town in having their questions answered, which is likely to discourage citizens from filing complaints.

I urge this committee to support Bill 7285 and to recognize the need for amendment in order for it to be effective. I therefore ask you to amend Bill 7285 so as to:

- 1) establish meaningful penalties for law enforcement agencies that do not comply with state complaint acceptance and investigation laws;
- 2) create a standardized complaint form that is compliant with best practices and translated into all commonly-spoken languages in Connecticut; and
- 3) require law enforcement agencies to track complaint data and to annually report specific complaint information to the Connecticut Office of Policy and Management.

Connecticut needs to have a transparent, accessible police complaint process. This is necessary in order to have the trust of the community and to have police accountability to the public. I therefore urge the members of this committee to support and amend House Bill 7285 as so indicated.

Thank you for your consideration.

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